19: Marshall M-5 (ca. 1910) 1922 AP1 Burma
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The Karen have been addicted to the use of liquor. Their feasts and religious observances have been occasions for drinking. It is reported that the Breçs are accustomed to store their grain in two bins, one (often the larger one) for that of which liquor is to be made, and the other for that which is to be used as food. On the plains I have not found the Karen greater drinkers than their neighbors. With the decay of the old rites and the spread of Christianity the evil seems to be on the decline. Among the members of the Baptist churches, however it may be in the other denominations, total abstinence is enjoined.

The Karen are lovers of music. In the early days they accompanied the chanting of their poems on their primitive harps and other instruments. The people of the Pegu Yomas, Tenasserim, in the delta of the Irrawaddy, have interesting tunes, which have been in use from the olden times. In other districts they have contented themselves with the rythm of chanting and moaning, melodies being conspicuous by their absence. The Maw Lay and other religious sects have had their own songs, which may be said to correspond to Christian hymns. With the introduction of Christianity came the music of the Western hymn-book, and to this the Karen have taken with their whole hearts. They love to sing and do not grow weary of it, however late the hour. Occidental music has taken such a hold on those who have become Christians that they have almost entirely given up their native music. A few hymns are sometimes sung to adaptations of their old tunes; but they prefer the Western melodies, and few of the young people know any other. They learn the new tunes readily and are able to sing glees and anthems by ear after a moderate amount of practice. Their voices are much softer than those of the Burmese and blend well in choruses. Some of the young women have very sweet voices, which seldom become harsh and rasping. While traveling in the hill country I was delighted one evening with the sweet voice of a young woman, which came floating up from the stream where she was drawing water. She was singing an old "hta" or poem, while I listened unobserved behind a clump of bamboos. No sooner did I step into the open than she ceased, and I could not persuade her to continue the song.

One discovers but few indications of a love of beauty among the Karen. They make little attempt to ornament their houses or their implements, so that the evidence of their possessing a sense

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months in all cases.[1] However, the names in the commonly accepted order are as follows:

1. *Th' le*, the searching month, when the villagers hunt for a new village site. It corresponds to the Burmese month, *Pyatho*, and to the moon of January.
2. *Hte kü*, the cutting month, when the Karen cut the jungle preparatory to cultivation. It is equivalent to the Burmese *Tabodwe* and to the moon of February.
3. *Thwe kaw*, the brewing month, when the women prepare the mash for brewing liquor. By some it is said to signify the month of burnings, for at this time they burn over the ground that was cut in the previous month. It is equivalent to the Burmese *Tabaung* and to the moon of March.
4. *La hkli*, the month of yams, because at this season the people were often reduced to the necessity of eating the tubers of the wild yam. It is equivalent to the Burmese *Tagu* and to the moon of April.
5. *De nya*, the lily month, when the wild lilies bloom. Equivalent to *Kasone* of the Burmese and to the moon of May.
6. *La nwi*, the seventh month, corresponds to the Burmese *Nayone* and to the moon of June.[2]
7. *La xo*, the eighth month, is equivalent to the Burmese *Waso* and to the moon of July.
8. *La hkü*, the shut-in month, when it is difficult to go about on account of the heavy rains. It corresponds to the Burmese *Wagaung* and to the moon of August.
9. *Hsi mü*, the month of a little sunshine, when after the heaviest rain there is a little fair weather. It corresponds to the Burmese *Tawthelin* and the moon of September.

[1] *The Karen Recorder*, a vernacular paper published by the Sgaw Karen Mission at Rangoon, printed a long discussion on the order of the months and the significance of their names, which appeared in various numbers from 1915 to 1917. The outcome of the discussion was not at all convincing.

[2] A writer in the Karen *Morning Star* in January, 1918, suggested another meaning for the name of this month, which comes at the opening of the rainy season when, as often happens, there are alternate weeks of sunshine and rain. Karens generally, probably almost without exception, understand the name of this month to refer only to its numerical position in the calendar.

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piece was sawn back and forth through a groove cut crosswise on the crest of another, the latter being a half-section of large bamboo laid over a quantity of shavings or punk. The heat thus generated in a minute or two produced smoke and a flame, and the tinder caught the blaze. A generation or two ago Karens carried fire pistons, when on a journey, to light their pipes. The description of this simple mechanism, which has been given to me, is that it was a bone or metal cylinder with a small hole at one end into which a tight-fitting piston was driven by a sharp blow and then quickly withdrawn. The air within was thus sufficiently compressed and heated to ignite a bit of tinder at the bottom of the cylinder.[3]

Milk does not form a part of the diet of the Karen people any more than it does of some other Oriental races. There is little with which to feed babies whose mothers can not nurse them. However, it is a comparatively rare thing for a mother not to be able to nurse her child. The first solid food given to babies is rice that has first been masticated by the mother. The kind of food eaten by the parents is given to their children as soon as they cry for it. This, I think, is one of the most fruitful sources of the high death rate among Karen infants.

The people in the hills eat three meals a day, one soon after rising, one at mid-day, and the third in the evening after the work is done. On the plains an early "chota hazri" of glutinous rice is sometimes, but not always, taken.[4] The regular morning meal comes somewhere between eight and ten o'clock and the afternoon repast between three and five. Tea is coming to be much used among the Karen, either the native pickled tea which is imported by the Burmese from the Shan states, or the Chinese and India teas which are now sold all over the country. The Karen drink their tea without milk and often put in a little salt in place of sugar. Coffee is used to some extent in the Karen hills and is drunk without milk, unless some one has brought home a can of condensed milk from town, this preparation being considered a most delicious sweetmeat.

Alcoholic beverages are brewed or distilled among the Karen. A kind of rice beer is made by allowing boiled rice to stand in jars of water and ferment. Old fermented rice is left in a jar, and fresh rice water is poured upon it. After standing several days, it ac-

[3] The fire piston is used by the Ibans in Borneo. It is also found throughout the Malay Peninsula and in Sumatra: Hose and MacDougall, *Pagan Tribes of Borneo*.

[4] "Chota hazri" is the Hindustani word used throughout India for the little breakfast of toast and tea or coffee that Europeans take immediately on rising.

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273 quires the desired strength or percentage of alcohol. Distilled liquor is obtained by boiling the fermented beverage in a closed vessel, from the top of which issues a bamboo pipe that leads to another vessel in which the steam condenses. A more concentrated solution of alcohol is thus secured. On the plains the glutinous rice, which is raised there, is much more commonly used in making liquor than the ordinary grain, because it contains a higher per- [344] centage of sugar. The plains possess another source of intoxicant in the "toddy-palms." (See pp. 105 and 220.) The juice of these palms, which exudes from the cut stems of the fronds, is collected and allowed to ferment, thus producing a liquor that is responsible for much of the crime committed by the rural people of all races.

[462] In former days, in the more backward Karen districts and in Siam, the preparation of drink constituted a considerable part of the work of the women. It was used with every meal and was regarded as a necessary part of the native diet. Large quantities of liquor were provided for every festival. But its use is lessening among the more progressive natives and is rapidly disappearing among the Christian Karens.

276 The use of betel and tobacco is prevalent among the Karen people. Indeed, one might say that it is almost universal among them. The betel-box is always carried on a journey and is ever at hand [574] where work is being done. When the guest arrives, the first act of hospitality is to push the box, replenished with its masticatories, in front of him. Betel, in the estimation of the Karen, forms a part of his food. Small bits of the areca-nut are laid on a fresh green leaf of the piper betel vine; lime is also smeared on the leaf, and perhaps a few cloves or shreds of tobacco leaf are added; the betel leaf is then folded into a wad and put into the mouth. In the process of chewing this "quid" the saliva is turned to a bright red, being secreted in such quantity that frequent expectoration is necessary. Wherever this spittle falls it leaves a red stain. The interior walls of the houses, especially in the corners, and the floors near the cracks are much stained with red. It is not safe to stop under a window or beneath a house, unless one is sure that nobody is within. An early missionary, who traveled with a white pony, was surprised one morning to find his animal wonderfully streaked with red, which yielded only to a vigorous washing. Betel chewing stains the teeth black, though it does not materially injure them, except that the hard usage wears them down or causes them to [805] break off prematurely. Karens often speak of a short space of

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"The mountains are great and lofty.
My desire brought me, panting.
Reeking with sweat on the towering hills,
My passion brought me, leaping and bounding.
I was wretched. I only trusted.
Whether good or bad the omens, come I would."

The whole company now enters the village, and its members are offered drink. (See page 185). Meanwhile, the young men shout:

"You have expected a company.
Can you feast such a company as we?
You invited a crowd.
Can you spread a feast for all of us?"

The hosts disclaim making any preparation for the company:

"There is nothing to eat.
Let us resort together to the betel-box.
As yet we have nothing else.
Let us partake from the bamboo betel-box."

But the guests will not be satisfied with betel chewing only:

"Boil for us. Brew our drink.
Feed us the white progeny of the pot.[7]
The hand raises food and drink,
And the heart is satisfied."

The women now insist that with little or no paddy they can do nothing:

"Have you not looked at the supply of paddy?
We women can prepare neither rice nor liquor.
Have you not seen the paddy?
We can neither cook rice nor brew liquor."

But the young men do not relax their demands:

"Bring out your distilling pipe.
That you have none, we do not believe.
Come prod us with your distilling tube.
That you lack one, we are not convinced."

At length, the women consent to supply what they have:

"We have nothing worth bringing to serve you,
But will fetch it, as ordered, though we suffer."

In some instances the intermediary acts as master of ceremonies for the young men, although they may choose another elder to serve as their leader. In Shwegyin, when the wedding party is about half-way to the village of the prospective bride, the elders

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[7] This refers to the white kernels of the cooked rice, which are often spoken of as the "children of the pot."

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585 halt the young men and instruct them in the proprieties of the ap-
273 proaching occasion, reminding them that they are going to a strange village where they will be entertained as guests. The hosts will serve them with rice and spirits. The elders remind them that the rice liquor that will be provided has been twice boiled and would intoxicate a horse or an elephant. They, therefore, advise moderation, telling them also not to hear any evil that may be spoken of them, to remain seated though others stand, to continue reclining though others sit up, to answer mildly though others speak roughly, and not to strike back should others slap them in the face. The elders require the company to say definitely that they will remember their advice, whereupon each one breaks a twig from a tree to be placed in a pile on the ground in token of the promise of all to conduct themselves properly and keep the peace.

585 A few years ago I visited a village in the Pegu Yomas at the time of a wedding. In the room of the bride's family they were preparing quantities of rice and curries. However, no liquor was in evidence. The bride herself was busy carrying water almost to the moment that the horns sounded at the village gate. The new clothing for the groom was resting upon the beam over the door. Now and again the horns and gongs could be heard in the distance. A party arriving from a village to the north waited outside the gate, in order to avoid the impropriety of preceding the groom's party, which was coming from across the valley, as the sounds reaching us from time to time from that direction informed us. As the groom's retinue ascended the hill, the waiting delegation hailed them with the din of their instruments, the other crowd giving vent in response with a volume of noise that showed them to be still unexhausted by the ascending of the hill. Brief intervals of silence followed by intermittent shouts and blasts of the horns indicated that the groom and his party were being welcomed by the elders.

585 As the procession again moved forward, we could catch
292 glimpses of the red-bordered smocks or "hse plos" of the men. On their nearer approach we could see the elders in the lead, followed by the married women and after them the groom attended by his party of young men. They now advanced along the narrow paths by twos and threes with their arms around each other, jumping and frolicing as they came. The bright colors of their costumes were accentuated by the bright red bags slung over their shoulders and the long tassels hanging from these. The large silver earrings adorned the lobes of their ears, which were further decorated by

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341. KAREN LIQUOR-STILL.

miniature bamboo hut is made (*tá-lhá*, No. 337), and furnished with utensils or symbols of such. The joints of bamboo piled against the horizontal bar represent vessels for the blood of the offering; the whole offering is really appropriated by the votaries. The *yahán* have persuaded the Karéns under their influence to discontinue keeping animals, so as to be out of temptation to sacrifice to *nats*. The Karén idea of *nat* is exclusively an evil spirit, whereas the Burmans have the conception of *thadyá* and *byammá*, beings of a transfigured human nature; by them *nat* is chiefly used in this sense (p. 186). The Karéns also offer to the *nats* the liquor they brew (*kaung*), which is distilled from a wort made by setting boiled rice to ferment. The drinking of this offering at the shrine is accompanied by saltatory movements. What the Karéns can save, they invest in purchase of elephants (No. 333). Owing to the transient nature of the hill-settlements, the paths do not get well enough worn for pack-oxen. The elephant is the only beast of burden available to them; an elephant can carry five to ten hundredweight in the hills (No. 314). A small village clubs together to buy an elephant to carry in the corn and take the secondary crops to market; well-to-do villages own several elephants. Individuals who own a couple are accounted wealthy, but some own as many as twenty. They hire the animals out for carrying produce or for timber-work, or engage in this business on their own account. Their spare cash the Karéns bury in the earth or hide in growing bamboos. The point of the *dá* is struck into a green culm so as to open a slit. The rupees are dropped in, the *dá* pulled out, and not a trace remains. Karéns are good workers in bamboo and cane, and are excellent woodmen. They are expert in

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342. KAREN HIDING COIN IN A GROWING BAMBOO.

343 778 thefts from /216/ the grain sheds are extremely rare (22).

[171] 22. T.C. Hodson reports this about the Naga, The Naga Tribes of Manipur (London, 1911), p. 42, in conjunction with McCulloch.

342 The crudely built bamboo house (Plate VII, 2) has in front a veranda which is reached by a steep ladder; the roof extends over the former (23).

23. A short remark about the Karenni house by A. Fischer, Zeitschrift für Ethnologie /Journal for Ethnology/, Vol. 35 (1903), pp. 991 ff.; the typical veranda of the house which has been reproduced here is completely damaged.

The occupants remain here during the daytime, and here the women keep their weaver's looms and spinning equipment; sometimes one of those [534] large bronze drums (pasi), which the literature mentions so often hang here. They belong to the most highly prized possessions of the Karen, and represent a very substantial barter element for the purchase of wives and similar transactions. The interior of the house contains only one room. [354] In its center is the fireplace with a structure hanging over it. On a bamboo platform, which stands around the entire wall space, are dishes, baskets, etc. The sleeping accommodations, not separated from each other, are in the rear of the room. Ears of corn and millet spikes--the [273] latter are used as an ingredient in the brewing [251] of rice brandy, which plays an important part with all the mountain tribes and also the Shan-- hang from the roof rafters. In between, hang large pieces of pork.